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AUTHOR Hernandez, Ada B.
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ABSTRACT

Lack of motivation to complete writing tasks leaves students unable to perform according to grade level expectations or to demonstrate mastery of school district objectives. To address this problem, a practicum involved 30 fifth grade students in a 36-week writing program using the process writing method. The goals of the practicum were as follows: (1) to improve the students' performance by having at least 65% of the students show an improvement in their writing skills scores; (2) to increase the students' interest and enthusiasm toward writing activities; and (3) to increase parent awareness of the effectiveness of process writing in improving students' writing skills. The program entailed encouraging students to write without regard to grammar restrictions and sentence structure, and using a holistic type of evaluation to grade their work. Results indicated that 70% of the students improved their writing scores notably and 80% of the students showed a marked improvement in their confidence and enjoyment of writing. Of the participants' parents, 93% were satisfied with the writing instruction their children were receiving and felt that their children had benefited by participating in the program, and 96% were satisfied with their children's progress using the process writing method after the program was completed. (Twenty-seven references and six appendixes containing questionnaires and evaluative materials are included.) (SKC)

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PRACTICUM REPORT

Center for the
Advancement of Education
Ed.D. Program

INCREASING FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF PROCESS WRITING

BY

ADA B. HERNANDEZ

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

INCREASING FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF PROCESS WRITING

by

Ada B. Hernandez

Cluster 18

A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed.D Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Dregree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1987

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.)

Verifier: Michael S. Gilbert (signature)

Sixth Grade Teacher
Title

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
Address

May 29, 1987
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Ada B. Hernandez under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Aug. 31, 1987
Date of Final Approval of Report

Muriel L. Lundy (signature)
Dr. Muriel L. Lundy, Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Increasing Fifth Grade Students' Writing Skills Through the Use of Process Writing.
Hernandez, Ada B., 1987: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.
Descriptors: Elementary Education / Holistic Evaluation / Teaching Methods / Technical Writing / Writing Evaluation / Writing Excercises / Writing Improvement / Writing Instruction / Writing Processes / Writing Skills.

This practicum addressed the problem of the low scores and the lack of enthusiasm and interest shown by fifth grade students in the area of writing. This lack of motivation results in their inability to perform according to grade level expectations in the writing areas and to show mastery of the required objectives according to the county public schools' balanced curriculum objectives standards.

The writer's goals were (a) to improve the students' performance by having at least 65% of the students show an improvement in their writing skills scores, (b) to increase the students' interest and enthusiasm towards writing activities, and (c) to increase parent awareness of the effectiveness of process writing in improving students' writing skills. In attaining these goals, the writer implemented a 36 week writing program using the process writing method, encouraging students to write without grammar restrictions and sentence structure, and using a holistic type of evaluation to grade their works.

Of the 30 students participating in the program, 70% improved their writing scores notably and 80% of the students showed a marked improvement in their confidence and enjoyment of writing. Of the participants' parents, after the program was completed, 93% were satisfied with the writing instruction their children had received and felt that their children had benefited by participating in the program, and 96% were satisfied with their children's progress using the process writing method.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Practicum Setting

This practicum was designed and implemented in one of the schools of the county public school system as a special project for the complete duration of the the 1986-87 school year. This is a new school which opened in the summer of 1986. It includes programs for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. This school is located on an 11 acre site in the northwest part of the county in a community with a population of 600,000.

The north district of the county school system consists of 28 community schools and 14 exceptional students centers in the elementary area. The total number of students in the system is 29,156 and the faculty consists of 4,055 total full-time teachers and 1,121 part-time teachers. These figures are taken from the County Public Schools District and School Profiles for 1985-86.

This new school opened for the summer school session of 1986. The school where the practicum was implemented is located in the north district. The school's staff and student population consists of the following:

There is 1 male Caucasian non-Hispanic principal, 1 female Hispanic assistant principal, 2 exceptional student teachers, 1 guidance counselor, 3 clerical/secretaries, 5 custodians, and 27 regular classroom teachers. This group of 27 teachers is made up of 5 males and 22 females. Of these teachers and according to the county schools guidelines and quota, 25% are Black, 25% are Hispanic and 50% are Caucasian non-Hispanic.

Of a total of 800 students, 3% of them are Caucasian non-Hispanic, 2% are Black non-Hispanic, 94% are Hispanic, and 1% are Asian/American Indians. Of these students, 25% have limited English proficiency. A total of 54% of these students participate in the compensatory education program.

The setting where this practicum was implemented was a self-contained fifth grade classroom. The class consisted of 30 students. The special equipment, which was needed for the implementation were the computers, which were used as word processors.

Community Information

This school serves a community of low and middle class families combining Black and Caucasian non-Hispanic families

and a predominant percentage of Hispanic families. This community consists of an approximate combination of 90% Hispanic, 6% Caucasian non-Hispanic, 2% Black non-Hispanic, and 2% Asian. A large number of families in this area live in apartments which are by far the most common type of dwelling for the students in this community. There are some town houses and single family residences.

The county has a continuing influx of immigrants from Latin America and Cuba. At the present time, approximately 87,390 Hispanic students attend the county public schools (District & School Profiles, 1985-86). In the community where the school is located, which is crowded with apartment buildings, movement of families is rather frequent, which is reflected in the constant dropping and adding of students in the class.

The Hispanic culture is evident in this area and the bilingualism is a crucial issue in this community. Even the mayor of the city is of Hispanic descent, and this culture with its traditions is evident in many public places around the area.

The Writer

This practicum was conducted by the writer, presently

an elementary fifth grade school teacher with ten years experience. Three of these ten years were spent as a kindergarten teacher, and the last seven years as a second grade teacher in the county public school system. She also teaches presently at the college level as an adjunct professor of a variety of undergraduate courses in the area of elementary education. In the past she has taught computer courses at the university level, to students seeking Master's or Specialist's Degrees in Computer Education. Her degrees include an Associate of Arts Degree, a Bachelor of Science in Education, a Master of Science in Early Childhood Education, and a Computer Educational Specialist Degree. The writer has published a computer awareness manual which has been implemented in some of the county public schools.

This teacher has the responsibility of educating the students assigned to her by teaching the daily required amount of hours every day, covering the prescribed and required balanced curriculum objectives in each subject area needed to be mastered by the students at this grade level. She is also the computer liaison for this school, and as such she handles all communications between the school and the school system's District Office.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Statement

The problem as it currently exists in this elementary school setting is the low scores and the lack of enthusiasm and interest shown by the the students in the area of writing skills. This lack of motivation occurs in their inability to perform according to grade level expectations in the writing areas and to show mastery of the required objectives according to the school system's balanced curriculum objectives standards.

This problem was noticed by the writer. It was discussed with the school principal, other teachers from the same school, as well as other schools in the system. It was identified as an important problem which needed to be solved.

The reason why the problem of the lack of motivation of these fifth grade students at this work location has not been solved before could be partially attributed to the fact that no one has taken the time to investigate or find a solution to it. It could be also the lack of motivation of the teachers themselves, who are involved in daily routines.

An innovative and motivating writing program implemented on a daily basis for a duration of at least one school year seemed to be very necessary to improve the students' performance. The principal wants to see higher writing scores, because it reflects favorably on the school image. This makes him demand more of the teachers. There are objectives to be mastered and daily time requirements of every subject on the curriculum to be met. This results in not enough time given to the teaching of the writing skills. Using the regular writing teaching methods the students could not get the necessary individual attention, nor could they get the motivation needed. There is an obvious discrepancy between the students ability to perform in this area and the desired results.

Briefly stated, the problem is that the the fifth grade students at this work setting are failing to properly complete their writing assignments and other literature and writing skills objectives. The students are being deprived of the opportunity to improve their writing skills because the school's administration and/or teachers are not taking the initiative to create and introduce innovative ways of teaching which will motivate the students and increase their interest. The result is that the students lack the motivation to grow academically in this area at the expected rate.

Evidence of the Problem

Evidence of the problem is demonstrated by a letter written by the principal (see Appendix A), stating that this problem is current and real at this school.

Secondly, the problem was demonstrated by a questionnaire administered to ten other teachers at the school (see Appendix B), to determine their deficiencies and needs in teaching the writing skills, and proving the existence of the problem in this area. The results of this questionnaire (see Table 1), show that all ten teachers agree or strongly agree with the existence of the problem identified by the writer.

Thirdly, the problem is evident in the results of the Statewide Student Assessment Test administered to all students in the state on October, 1986 (see Table 2). This table shows the students' scores and their relation to the statewide average for this test.

Finally, evidence of the problem was demonstrated in a pre-implementation questionnaire given to the students as well as the parents (see Appendices C and D). The responses to these questionnaires are reported on charts, using the data compiled (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 1

Teachers' Questionnaire Results

Statement	Responses				
	S.A.	A.	U.	D.	S.D.
1. I feel that a new method of teaching writing in which activities such as sharing, rehearsing, drafting, revising, and editing would be included, could help our students improve their writing skills.	7	3	0	0	0
2. I believe that modern technology such as computers could be a motivational factor which could improve the students' interest in writing.	6	4	0	0	0
3. I believe that parents should get involved guiding their children with their writing assignments and showing interest	10	0	0	0	0
4. I feel that mechanical factors such as spelling, handwriting, or punctuation hinder the students' ability to write as well as their enjoyment of writing.	5	4	1	0	0
5. I found through the years that it is hard for many students to come up with topics for their stories.	8	2	0	0	0

Note. S.A = Strongly agree, A. = Agree, U. = Uncertain, D. = Disagree, S.D. = Strongly disagree.

Causes of the Problem

In this county's public schools there are 120,571 elementary school students enrolled as shown in the 1985-86 District & School Profiles. Of these students, 16,885 were

Table 2

1986 Statewide Student Assessment Test Results

Student	Score	Difference	Student	Score	Difference
Carlos	84	- 4	Jorge	87	- 1
Guadalupe	81	- 7	Dulio	84	- 4
Marco	83	- 5	Alejandro	81	- 7
Galina	80	- 8	Dara	86	- 2
Evelyn	82	- 6	David	85	- 3
Jessica	87	- 1	May	91	+ 3
Bonnie	89	+ 1	Ihosvany	81	- 7
Rolando	80	- 8	Diana	79	- 9
Martha	81	- 2	Roberto	92	+ 4
Nuris	79	- 9	Karen	86	- 2
Gerald	83	- 5	Mariolys	85	- 3
Shazia	90	+ 2	Victor	74	- 14
Alberto	82	- 6	Eduardo	87	- 1
Josefa	87	- 1	Cindy	89	+ 1
Rachel	92	+ 4	Emy	83	- 5

Note. Statewide average = 88. "-" = Points under average, "+" = Points over average.

served by the Chapter I program and 6,400 by Compensatory Education classes. This means that those students were deficient in the areas of math, reading and/or writing. Although the teachers follow a very structured, balanced curriculum, a clear set of objectives to teach, as well as charting and management systems to complete, the fact is that the specific methods to teach those objectives are left to the teacher. The methods used by the majority of the teachers have proven to be very boring and ineffective,

Table 3

Students' Pre-Implementation Questionnaire Results.

Question	Responses		
	Yes	No	Maybe
1. Do you enjoy Writing?	7	21	2
2. Do mechanical factors such as spelling, handwriting, or punctuation hinder you from enjoying writing?	26	2	2
3. Do you feel that you could be an author who could produce and publish written work effectively?	3	25	2
4. Is it easy for you to come up with topics for your stories?	3	23	4
5. Have you ever worked with a word processor?	9	21	0
6. Do you think you will enjoy it?	9	15	6
7. Do you feel that sharing your writing efforts with your teacher and friends could help you create good writing papers?	4	10	16
8. Would you enjoy having your best written work bound in some form of book at the end of the year?	18	4	8

especially in the area of writing where creativity and independence is desperately needed.

The lack of knowledge on the teacher's part of new methods to use is very common. Very often the lack of

Table 4

Parents' Pre-Implementation Questionnaire Results

Statement	Responses				
	S.A.	A.	U.	D.	S.D.
1. Parents should get involved helping their children with their homework writing assignments.	7	9	6	8	0
2. I am satisfied with the basic writing instruction that my child is currently receiving.	0	5	8	10	7
3. I believe that the involvement of my son/daughter in this program will benefit him/her.	0	6	7	12	5
4. I believe that by working with my child I can help him/her with his/her writing skills.	6	10	7	7	0
5. I feel that my child's progress in the area of writing is satisfactory	0	4	6	9	11

Note. S.A = Strongly agree. A. = Agree. U. = Uncertain. D. = Disagree. S.D. = Strongly disagree.

teacher interest is seen in the daily routines performed out of habits of years of repetitious methods.

Students at the fifth grade level are lacking motivation to perform the monotonous writing activities which teachers have been using as teaching strategies for years. This lack of motivation results in an impatient writing student. They don't know that there is a process to

learn. This writing process could be considered as a craft of shaping the written material toward the final draft.

There is a problem or need for these students to learn a long, but innovative process of shaping material and to bring it to a level where it is satisfying to the person doing the crafting. One cause of the problem is the lack of control to take charge of information in their writing and realize their intentions. They need the teachers' guidance and motivation to have a reason for writing and then to learn through making decisions.

Another possible cause of this problem is that the parents at home do not show the needed concern and participation to stimulate the students into trying to improve their skills. This could be because of their lack of knowledge of writing. Many times parents are not aware of their children's needs, or if they are they might not know what to do about it.

All of these problems are very common today in our schools. They have been addressed by other professionals writing about them. The causes of this problem have been faced by various research studies which have been conducted, as well as some innovative programs which have been implemented.

Review of the Literature

Ever since his doctoral dissertation in 1972-73 on the composing process of seven-year-old children, Donald H. Graves has written many articles and books in relation to this problem. In his book Writing: Teachers & Children at Work (1983) he tries to assist the classroom teachers in the context of everyday situations with children's writing, based on findings of a National Institute of Education study conducted in Atkinson, New Hampshire from 1978 to 1980.

In his book A Researcher Learns to Write-Selected Articles and Monographs (1984), Graves starts by giving an account of his writing experiences and studies. He seems to attend to student's problems in writing caused by conventions, motor and aesthetic concerns, and revisions, and he notes that many maintain their preocupation with spelling and handwriting throughout their writing careers. He explains that teachers must provide help so that they can be free to focus on information and intention.

Hansen, Newkirk, and Graves (1985) investigated a process-centered reading program that expanded the writing workshop of the earlier Atkinson, NH study. Using the students' writings about reading in learning logs, answering process-centered questions posed in conferences with the

teacher, and sharing their results with fellow students has resulted in classroom programs designed to be very profitable and useful to classroom teachers and students.

This three step process (prewriting, writing, and evaluating), is used with an effective classroom management plan. When followed with publishing and making sure that this teaching process is integrated into the content areas, it has been very positively accepted by teachers and will continue to be translated into practical curricula.

In his latest book, Write From the Start (1985), Graves tells the stories of writing successes in schools across the country. He emphasized that children begin to write almost as soon as they begin to talk. An important component of this latest book by Graves is the attention given to ways in which parents can help children at home so that parents and teachers can work together to improve children's writing.

Marie M. Clay (1986) states that the constructive process (Spiro, 1980) has proven to be an effective one, and one that is playing an important role in academic learning. She suggests it as the one we must develop to achieve the student's response to a teacher. The students use of different medias such as: reading, talking, applying arts, and crafts, according to Clay has captured the interest of

youth. She finds this method to be an answer to the problem of developing effective writers when she defines the child as a constructor of his/her own knowledge, claiming that the child acts on his/her own theories of how things work and changes these theories, in the face of conflicting evidence.

The child, according to Clay, is a constructor of responses who becomes fast and fluent in reproducing the things he/she knows. Learning to write is more the act of creating networks of links rather than just building up fast responses. Her suggestion of guiding the child this way, requires him/her to remember, recall, problem-solve, and many other activities which will help in the learning process so necessary to develop writing skills.

By taking this constructive route the child is shifting from conventional activities which use traditional strategies such as repetitive tasks and role learning. Clay suggests a strategy which includes a constructive mode of thinking that could be linked to personal knowledge and would result in a successful output.

D'Angelo, Bromley, and McKeveny (1986) presented in their paper the precis writing. This strategy, which is geared to develop vocabulary, critical reading, and comprehension, has been presented as an effective method of

reading and writing (Bromley, 1985). Two studies of sixth graders suggest that writing a summary statement or precis enhances recall and comprehension of content material (Doctorow, Wittrock, and Marks, 1978).

A study of fifth grade students found precis writing and outlining to be equally helpful in learning content material (Bromley, 1985). Suggestions for successful instruction in precis writing include using a prewriting strategy, establishing a purpose, and making a commitment. It has been suggested that using precis writing twice a week during an entire semester can be more effective than using it daily for 45 minutes for three or four weeks. The use of demonstrations and simulations, providing models or copies of selections, and engaging in verbal practices are recommended. Then the writing or composing period begins in which the students work in groups allowing for adaptations.

Finally when the students have a model or copy of an acceptable precis they can compare, evaluate, and revise their own. Folders of students' work are kept. According to D'Angelo, Bromley, and McKeveny (1986) this writing teaching technique, when successfully integrated into content area curricula, demonstrates the relationship of reading and writing and promotes positive experiences in comprehending, analyzing, and composing.

Allan R. Neilsen (1986) presents the results of an inservice given on knowing by doing, an active approach to writing inservice. He summarized guidelines that promote good writing skills and which teachers promote in their own classrooms. These guidelines were: (a) students must retain ownership of their writing, (b) students need sufficient time to write, (c) teachers should write with their students, (d) initial emphasis when responding to students' writing should be on ideas, and (e) feedback should be constructive.

The inservice was considerd very successful and there was evidence that the guidelines selected were consistent with the research and recommendations of Donald Graves (1983) and Jerome Harste and colleagues (1984).

Michele L. Simpson (1986) presents the Predict, Organize, Rehearse, Practice, and Evaluate (PORPE) writing strategy for studying and learning in the content areas. This strategy is to be used as an independent learning strategy for planning, monitoring, and evaluating in any content area. PORPE evolved in response to the students' anxiety about essay examinations. It is a five-step strategy which requires students to behave as effective readers with awareness and control of their own cognitive activities.

The five steps - predict, organize, rehearse, practice, and evaluate - according to this article have many advantages for students and teachers. PORPE capitalizes on the power of verbal language, involving students in defining tasks, and setting purposes. It makes explicit the processes necessary for preparing for an essay exam because it requires a split mental focus which demands that students concentrate on both content and themselves to see if learning is occurring. It is a strategy that moves from total teacher guidance and instruction to total student independence and control. It can be taught in any content area without jeopardizing the necessary time for the learning of content area concepts.

Judith A. Langer (1986) conducted research related to learning through writing. It focused on reading, writing, cognition, and the importance of being aware of the intersection of these with the student's learning as well as the teacher's instruction. Langer's way of solving the problem of learning difficulty is by conbining reading and writing and at the same time teaching writing skills across the curriculum.

Because of successful results of a study conducted with secondary school children (Applebee and Langer, 1982), Langer recommends this teaching strategy. This research

relates to the writer's problem only in part. Yet it is a study that shows what students could learn from writing, as well as what different kinds of writing experiences they could have.

Carol P. Lowthian and James Mingle (1982) speak in their Writing Across the Curriculum about a successful movement, and examine ways two colleges have incorporated writing into their education requirements. Lowthian and Mingle focus on the practical application of content area writing, and programs using writing assignments in all areas of the curriculum to deal with the current problems of deficiency in writing skills in our schools.

In her Research on Writing Development, Dr. Dahl (1985), an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at the University of Cincinnati, discusses the work of Harste, Burke, and Woodward (1981, 1983, 1984). Dr. Dahl explains patterns of early writing development in preschool children in which Harste, Burke, and Woodward showed that children are written language users long before reaching the school.

In their research they used children from three to six years of age to prove that, as a result of the need to communicate meaning and make sense of their environment and experiences, literacy before schooling is common. They

showed the capability and willingness of young children to learn through risk-taking situations when their writing development procedures needed improvement. They conclude that children's writing is socially based and a part of the written language of their culture. They suggest that the teacher should play a role of facilitator, support the children's efforts and the risk they are taking, and take advantage of the situation to provide them with a well prepared writing program at that early age.

Harste, Burke, and Woodward (1984) describe written language learning as a naturally evolving process which permits the child to engage functionally in his/her world. It is a process which is learned in the same manner that oral language is learned, through encountering a wide range of meaningful contexts to allow exploration and the expanding of their writing ability.

Dr. Dahl (1985) also examines Dr. Graves work (1983). In his research conducted at the Atkinson Academy in Atkinson, New Hampshire, he provides classroom centered descriptions of writing development for children ages six through ten. Graves feels that children think of themselves as authors when consistently engaged in writing. This leads to his proposal of a program in which the child engages himself in a daily writing period in a process of sharing,

conferencing, revising, editing, and publishing.

Although Ulle E. Lewes' (1985) Articulation with School Teachers on Writing: Do's and Don'ts and Suggested Programs, a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, could be considered to be at a higher educational level than the problem this writer dealt with, it relates to it in an important way.

Lewes (1985) states the importance of developing substantial links between colleges and elementary schools to create a longitudinal process for developing writing skills. We as teachers can work to tighten these links by uncovering students' needs starting at the elementary level and relating those needs to high schools and later colleges. Lewes recommends developing a holistic grading scale to be used at different levels.

Ernest Balajthy (1985) reported the results of his study as a critic of computer software in education. Balajthy states that the computer is an ineffective method to be used in the area of writing. Computers have been proven to be very effective in other areas such as math. In math successful results have been achieved through drills using an innovative and motivational strategy.

Limitations on the computer's ability to process natural language justifies teachers' reservations about using the computer for direct instruction in this area. The computers' interaction by exact match limits the students' creativity and individuality. Computers could be very effectively used in a writing program as a motivational technique. The students could use the word processor to do their corrections as they write and see a hard print of their final product. The limitations of interaction create a serious problem if computers are used incorrectly.

The potential of word processors for teaching composition is enormous. Spelling checker programs such as Sensible Speller (Sensible Software) flag misspelled words, and data base programs such as the ones designed by Scholastic Software Publishing Corp. help students organize and file information for research projects and class book reports. Programs like Grammatik (Aspen Software) perform limited but effective analyses of compositions for grammar and usage errors.

In all these applications, however, whether the computer is used as a tool or simply as a device to which students can respond with problem solving or expressive activities, the human teacher is essential to provide feedback and facilitate instruction. The teacher as a human

factor provides the needed basis for interaction. The limitations of computers in writing programs is very clear and they should be used accordingly.

Each of the articles selected for literature review described a different approach to teaching writing. Current understanding of children's writing has been influenced by more than two decades of research on different teaching strategies to improve the writing deficiencies. Current approaches presented by Dr. Dahl (1985), in which she compares Harste, Burke, and Woodward (1981, 1983, and 1984) to Graves (1983), and his process writing program shows their way of dealing with preschool children.

The importance of developing substantial links between grade levels and the importance of preparing the students for the transition from elementary school to high school, and from there to college is well presented by Lewes (1985). He focuses on a holistic type of evaluation which is an effective and recommended method to use in writing evaluation.

Carol V. Bertrand (1983) presented her paper Factors in Holistic Ratings of Children's Writing at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference. The purpose of this paper was to investigate factors influencing holistic

writing evaluations. Teachers evaluated holistically by rating papers from one for a poorly written paper, to four for an excellent paper at that grade level. The study was done by asking the students to respond to a given stimulus or suggested idea. In this case it was: "E.T. went home and you have gone with him. Describe the world you found when you stepped off the spaceship." Papers were identified by numbers only. Examples of papers rated as one and four are given. The results of this study showed that holistic ratings correlated significantly with student reading and language scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test.

Joan Videen (1982) conducted a study to determine whether counting correct sequences is a valid measure of written expression for use in a formative evaluation system for elementary students. Correlation between correct word sequences and several criterion measures, including a holistic rating, were very high. A very clear explanation of the holistic method used was presented.

Ann Humes (1980) in her paper Assessing Writing Profeciencies With Writing Samples in Grades 2-6, presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, described three different scoring sytems to evaluate student's writing samples. In this paper's description of holistic evaluation, is explained that it was

developed by the Educational Testing Service in 1976. It involves a comparative evaluation of essays. The papers are frequently scored on a scale ranging from one to eight, although a range of four may be used.

This pilot study was conducted in grades two to six. The results suggested that the new model is appropriate for evaluating writing samples that are a part of competency tests. Also reported were the test data that supported the author's theory.

Leif Fearn (1982) presents the results of her research. One elementary school writing sample written to cue under a five-minute time limit was presented to 33 teachers who had been trained to use holistic and a primary trait writing sample assessment system. This paper, Measuring Mechanical Control in Writing Samples, and its clear description of the system used, is another good presentation of the use of holistic evaluation.

Finally, if we consider the importance of computers and the new technological advances of this modern world we live in, then we must do research and consider all the possibilities of including computers when preparing a new educational program.

Balajthy (1985) points out the positive as well as the negative aspects of using computers in such a program. He gives suggestions as to how computers can become an integral part of the students' everyday learning, blending the motivational force of this technological advancement with the usage of effective software in an everyday learning routine. It is important for the teacher to be aware of the limitations of the computer when used in a writing program, and to balance its use with the very important and necessary factor which is the teacher, the human interaction.

In conclusion the writer decided to use these ideas in a special and effective writing program. To implement a program considering that children are written language users long before reaching the school's doors (Harste, Burke, and Woodward, 1984); to use Graves process writing techniques; to plan a curriculum which could develop substantial links in a longitudinal process for developing writing competencies (Lewes, 1985); and to use the computers as a motivational teachers' aide.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goal

The goal of the practicum was to offer innovative instruction through the use of process writing and motivational techniques for fifth grade students, which would result in an improvement in students' writing.

Specific Objectives

This practicum was designed to meet three specific objectives:

1. At the conclusion of this program, 65% of the students will show improvement in their writing skills. This improvement will be demonstrated when their year-end writing assignments are compared to their first assignments of the year using a holistic evaluation method.

2. At the conclusion of this program, 65% of the students will show a marked improvement in their interest and enthusiasm towards writing activities. This improvement will be demonstrated by comparing their responses to the attitude questionnaire at the end of the year to their

responses at the beginning of the year.

3. At the conclusion of this program, 65% of the parents will show a noted improvement in acknowledging the effectiveness of process writing when their responses to a year-end questionnaire are compared to their responses at the beginning of the year.

Evaluation Instruments

The following evaluation instruments were used in this practicum:

1. To measure the first objective of the program, students were evaluated with a holistic type of evaluation. To evaluate the papers, the writer sorted each stack of essays into four piles. The papers were scored on a scale ranging from one to four. The evaluator read each sample, and gave a rating of her overall impression of the quality on a scale from one to four. A score of one is poor, two is average, three is above average, and four is excellent. Holistic evaluation guidelines (see Appendix E) were followed by the writer to rate the papers.

After the process of revising, editing, conferring, rehearsing, and sharing the students were graded on their

best paper for each marking period. Comparison between the first and last paper took place. The writer saved the first written paper and compared it for content improvement with the last written paper of the year.

2. An attitude questionnaire (see Appendix C) was developed by the writer to measure the second objective to prove the student's motivation improvement.

3. A teacher-made questionnaire (see Appendix D) was given to parents at the beginning and end of the implementation period to indicate the attitude improvement and involvement of parents in the program.

4. Various teacher-made evaluation checklists were used regularly throughout the implementation period, including different revising/editing checklists (see Appendix F).

5. Holistic evaluation was used by the writer to grade every paper turned in during the course of the year. According to Diederich (1974), this method of rating on general impression of the writing is a quick summing up of characteristics that determine whether a paper is high, middle, or low in general merits. It consists of giving a single grade or score to each essay rather than a number of ratings on various qualities.

6. Constant personal observation by the teacher is another method the writer used during the implementation period. While students worked within their own groups, the writer made a constant effort to individually guide the students to be their own evaluators as well as help, guide, and evaluate each other's work.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Possible Alternative Solutions

The writer of this practicum reviewed the research literature which provided information relevant to the problem. This information helped guide her to find a possible solution to the current, established needs and limitations found in the schools due to the use of boring traditional writing methods.

This literature review revealed activities which could solve some of these problems, such as daily writing of an individual journal, integration of writing into other content area curricula such as social studies or science using the process writing, using computers as a motivational technique, or even arts and crafts (following a constructive approach). The writer related these needs and how others have dealt with similar problems.

The Handbook for Writing Practices developed by the Washington Elementary District No. 6 of Phoenix, AZ (1981) encourages the use of journals. Writing journals gives the students the opportunity to assess what they know or may need to learn, practice writing skills in an unthreatened

manner, clarify thoughts and ideas, and experience ownership of a product of their own effort.

The students may share ideas on their journals with classmates. The teacher may choose to write comments or questions on the child's journal page, but never make corrections of journal spelling or grammar. The teacher's help must always be positive and encouraging, placing the highest value on the expression of ideas.

All the solutions found in the research similar to the problem faced by the writer pointed out several positive and different ways of using diverse methods to teach writing and assist students in their deficiencies.

One such solution was presented by Clay (1986). She uses different medias such as reading, talking, and applying arts and crafts with the idea of capturing the child's interest and developing him/her as a constructor of his/her own theories of how things work and change. The teacher guides the students through a path of recalling and problem-solving situations utilizing many activites which help the student in the learning process. Clay's strategy was a possible alternative solution to the student's writing difficulties. With this constructive mode of thinking, a possible solution could be attained.

Another possible solution was the use of precis writing, a strategy that has been effective in developing vocabulary, critical reading, and comprehension. Researchers claim that this method, when integrated into the content area curricula, will demonstrate the relationship between reading and writing as it promotes positive experiences in comprehension and composing.

The writer also considered the use of the Predict, Organize, Rehearse, Practice, and Evaluate (PORPE) method which stresses the power of verbal language. The strategies of this program incorporate a method of teaching which moves from total teaching guidance and instruction, to total student independence and control. This practice could have succeeded in giving the students the independence that would awaken their enthusiasm and interest in the subject.

Solution Selected

The writer considered the process writing as the best solution for the problem which she attempted to solve because this process has been proven to be a successful appraoch. Combining process writing with modern technological equipment, such as computers to be used as a motivational tool, made it possible for this problem to be addressed and solved.

If we consider that the majority of the students involved in the project had never worked with computers, one could hypothesize that it would be a motivational experience for them. At the same time this motivation would help them in improving their academic achievement which would in turn raise the scores needed in the area of writing.

Implementing a plan to assist the fifth grade students in building up their interest and enthusiasm to practice the needed skills in writing through the use of a process writing method could be proven to be successful when used for an implementation period of an entire school-year or even longer.

The writer selected process writing as the appropriate solution to use in solving the problem after conducting a literature search and comparing methods implemented in similar situations. Other methods, such as precis writing (D'Angelo, Bromley and McKeveny, 1986), or constructive process (Clay, 1986), could have been used as alternative solutions.

Process writing has been tried in many other situations and settings, and it has been proven to be a successful method. When the writer compared her school population to the ones in which this method has been used, she found one

difference which she had to consider in order to avoid what could have been a barrier to the implementation. The large Hispanic population and their language deficiency forced the teacher to pay special attention to children with this limitation.

According to Graves (1984), process writing is a series of operations leading to the solution of a problem. The process begins when the writer consciously or unconsciously starts a topic, and it is finished when the written piece is published.

Many will consider five steps in process writing. These steps are prewriting, composing, revising, editing, and publishing.

Prewriting must include a process of experiencing, discovering, and making focal choices.

Composing follows a process of forming. It goes into making language choices to develop structure and sequence (which results in a rough draft).

Revising is the step in which the draft is edited for content. It could be done by peers in which case the teacher works as a facilitator.

Editing must be included in this process. This is the step where the draft is edited for mechanics. The students, with the teacher's guidance, edit gramatical errors.

There were many positive points in favor of process writing to be used at this school setting. One had to consider that the students at this location had never worked in a situation where they could sit down and write the first draft free of the correct usage of mechanical factors such as spelling, handwriting, punctuation, or grammar.

Additionally, most of these students had never worked with computers, or had never had the satisfaction of participating in activities such as sharing, rehearsing, drafting, revising, and editing to produce a finished product bound in a book. It was easy to hypothesize that these motivational experiences should result in improvement of their academic achievement in the area of writing.

In order for the writer's first objective to be satisfied, a writing assignment was given to the students at the beginning and again at the end of the implementation. These assignments were evaluated by the writer using a holistic evaluation method. Papers from both assignments were classified as excellent, above average, average, and poor score papers. In order for the program to be

successful, an increase of at least 65% in excellent score papers had to be attained at the end of the implementation period.

The following programs are just three samples of programs which have been implemented with successful results. The writing research conducted by Graves (1983), at the Atkinson Academy in Atkinson, New Hampshire, was funded by a National Institute of Education grant. This project documented how children learn to write in school. It was proven to be very successful. What started to be a classroom program for writing instruction turned out to be a process writing sample for other teachers to follow.

The Washington Elementary District No. 6 in Phoenix, Arizona implemented this method with such success that it even established a district direction in writing, which resulted in a Handbook of Writing Practices, written by a group of Washington district teachers, who have been active in the Writing Practices Institute since the 1980-81 school year.

The writer attended a process writing workshop given at the University of Miami, FL. This workshop was given in June, 1986 by Doctor Jackie K. Mathews, program consultant for Elementary Language Arts for the Orange County Public

Schools, Orlando, Florida. In this workshop a very detailed presentation was given of a successful program implemented at Orange County following the process writing guidelines.

The writer considered process writing as the solution to the problem at her school based on the results obtained by other programs implemented using this method. Process writing should satisfy the writer's goals of improvement in student's writing abilities with innovative, motivational techniques.

Report of Action Taken

The implementation of this practicum began at the beginning of the 1986-87 school year, on September 2nd, 1986. It lasted for the entire 36 weeks of the school year. During the thirty-sixth week of implementation (the last week of the school year), the final evaluation took place and the data was compiled to write this report.

During the first week of school the writer gained administrative permission, informed the parents of the plans and goals; conducted teacher, parent, and student surveys; and collected the first written paper from each student.

During the second week, the writer rated the students'

first written assignments and grouped the students according to their needs.

Once the students had been grouped, the writer considered it imperative to set the proper climate for the program by creating an atmosphere of freedom, comfort, and trust; where the students were encouraged to work without fear of judgement or ridicule. To this end, the students were encouraged to talk about the things that mattered to them. Every student's contribution was valued and respected, and this gave the students assurance and made them feel liked by their teacher and peers.

The writer then used a variety of motivating activities such as making use of community resources, reviewing films and filmstrips, and browsing through magazines in order to to expand the students' listening, thinking, speaking, and reading skills.

The students were then introduced to the use of the word processor. Academically strong students were encouraged to serve as tutors in this area. The students were also introduced to the process writing vocabulary such as author's chair, conference, edit, peer conference, rough draft, and revision.

Rehearsal, drafting, and revision strategies were presented to the students. The rehearsal strategy consisted of a series of activities to put the pieces together in preparation for choosing the final topic for the paper to be written. The drafting strategy consisted of writing ideas as fast as possible, without being critical of style or content at that point, talking to peers, and getting ideas. The revision strategies became specific and dealt with beginning a piece, ending a piece, or looking at different possible forms.

Students were introduced to the editing symbols and editing checklists to be used with every piece written. Students were issued their own copies of both forms (see Appendix F).

By the fourth and fifth week of the program, the students were beginning to understand and enjoy the process writing system. At this point the students were made aware that the process writing system was to be followed in all their writing assignments during the year, and would be extended to some of the other content areas.

Although the writer intended to hold a parents night during the fourth week to explain the program and show them samples of the students' work, this had to be postponed

until the sixth week due to the new school inaguration. This two-week delay proved to be profitable because at that point the students were progressing noticeably in their work. This resulted in the parents looking favorably on the program and pledging their support to help the students progress along.

For the next several weeks the writer continued to encourage the students to write freely. The purpose of this was to give the students confidence as well as improve their knowledge of the use of the word processor before moving into the area of revising and editing. The results were very positive, the students felt at ease and expressed themselves very openly. They were enjoying their writing assignments.

As the year progressed, some of the writer's strategies were altered by the reaction of the students. The writer began keeping a teacher's log as originally proposed as well as journals on the students' activities. However, most of the students seemed to feel intimidated by the teacher's "recording" of the activities. They felt more at ease keeping their own logs and journals, and took pride in their work. As a result, it was decided to allow the students to keep their own logs.

In December, and again in March, the students were re-grouped according to their progress. By doing this, the

students were kept in properly balanced groups, and the group changes allowed the students to share and review their work with different groups of students during the year. Each time re-grouping took place, the students seemed to become more enthusiastic about their work, as if they were trying to impress their new group with the quality of their work.

In the revision process, the writer discussed the cut-and-paste method of revising used in some of the research studies reviewed by the writer. Although the process was found to be very messy and time-consuming, the same concept used with the word processor was very efficient in rearranging paragraphs, and taught the students a new and interesting dimension of the word processor.

One problem encountered during the year was that three of the least academically advanced students refused to write with the rest of the class. This problem was addressed by having each of the students work with a partner. Each student watched his partner write and then was asked to give his partner suggestions on how to improve the story. Before long, these students realized that they were able to put their own stories together and ask their partners for suggestions on how to improve them.

During the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth week of the

year the students' final writings were edited and placed in final draft form. The writer then evaluated them and compared them to the students' first paper of the year. The students selected their five best papers of the year, the cover to use, and the type of binding to use to create their own writing books.

The students' writing books were sent home along with the parents' post-implementation questionnaires to gather the parents responses.

During the last week of the program, the writer made a final evaluation of the program and prepared to submit the final report with results, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results and Conclusions

At the conclusion of the implementation period the data were compiled by the writer to analyze the results.

The first objective (students will show improvement in a written assignment completed at the end of implementation when compared to a similar assignment completed at the beginning of implementation) was measured by the holistic evaluation method for each student and for the total class.

First each student's pre and post-implementation holistic score was listed on a chart (see Table 5). This chart revealed the following results.

Of the 10 students scoring in the above average and average ranges before implementation, nine scored excellent, and one went from average to above average after implementation; of the 14 students scoring poor before implementation, seven scored in the above average range and five scored in the average range after implementation; and all six students scoring excellent before implementation continued to score excellent after implementation was

Table 5

Students' Pre and Post-Implementation Holistic Scores

Student	Score		Student	Score	
	Pre-Imp.	Post-Imp.		Pre-Imp.	Post-Imp.
Carlos	1	3	Jorge	3	4
Guadalupe	1	3	Dulio	1	3
Marco	2	4	Alejandro	1	2
Galina	1	2	Dara	2	4
Evelyn	1	2	David	2	3
Jessica	3	4	May	4	4
Bonnie	4	4	Ihosvany	1	3
Rolando	1	3	Diana	1	1
Martha	2	4	Roberto	4	4
Nuris	1	2	Karen	3	4
Gerald	1	3	Mariolys	2	4
Shazia	4	4	Victor	1	1
Alberto	1	2	Eduardo	3	4
Josefa	2	4	Cindy	4	4
Rachel	4	4	Emy	1	3

Note. 1 = poor, 2 = Average, 3 = Above average, 4 = Excellent.

completed. This means that 22 students out of 30 (73.3%) of the students improved their scores after implementation of this practicum.

The second holistic evaluation measure for the first objective is a comparison chart (see Table 6). This chart indicates the number of papers that were scored excellent, above average, average, or poor at the beginning and at the end of the program and the percentage of increase or decrease in each category.

Table 6

Students' Pre and Post-Implementation Scores Comparison Chart

Category	Scores		Comparison	
	Pre-Imp.	Post-Imp.	Variation	Percentage
Excellent	6	15	+ 9	+ 150.0 %
Above Average	4	8	+ 4	+ 100.0 %
Average	6	5	- 1	- 16.0 %
Poor	14	2	- 12	- 85.7 %

Examination of this chart reveals that once implementation had been completed, an increase of 150% in excellent scores and 100% in above average scores had been realized. This translates to an increase in above average and excellent scores of 125%. On the other hand, at the end of implementation, poor scores had declined by 85.7%. Although average scores only decreased by one, it must be understood that all six students scoring average before implementation, raised their scores after implementation. The five students scoring average after implementation had scored poor at the beginning of the year.

The foregoing gave the writer conclusive evidence that the first objective of this practicum was clearly met. The objective called for 65% of the students to show improvement in their writing skills, and the practicum resulted in 73.3%

of the students improving their scores.

An attitude questionnaire developed by the writer to measure the second objective (students will find enjoyment and new motivation regarding the process writing program), was given to the students at the beginning of the program (see Appendix C). A similar questionnaire was administered to the students at the end of the 36 weeks of implementation. The data gathered as a result of these two questionnaires was analyzed and posted on a chart (see Table 7) listing the answers to each question individually, and the number and the percentage of students selecting the different answers to each question.

Reviewing this chart, the writer found some very notable differences.

Question #1. Do you enjoy writing? In answer to this question prior to implementation only 7 students answered "yes" while 21 answered "no". After implementation a complete reversal was observed with 24 students answering "yes" and only 3 answering "no" to the same question.

Question #2. Do mechanical factors such as spelling, handwriting, or punctuation hinder you from enjoying writing? To this question 26 of the 30 participating

Table 7

Students' Pre and Post-Implementation Questionnaires Results Comparison Chart

Question		Pre-Impl. Resp.	Pre-Impl. %	Post-Impl. Resp.	Post-Impl. %	Diff.
1. Do you enjoy writing?	Yes	7	23.3	24	80.0	+ 17
	No	21	70.0	3	10.0	- 18
	Maybe	2	6.7	3	10.0	+ 1
2. Do mechanical factors such as spelling, handwriting or punctuation hinder you from enjoying writing?	Yes	26	86.6	5	16.7	- 21
	No	2	6.7	21	70.0	+ 19
	Maybe	2	6.7	4	13.0	+ 2
3. Do you feel that you could be an author who could produce and publish written work effectively?	Yes	3	10.0	27	90.0	+ 24
	No	25	83.3	2	6.7	- 23
	Maybe	2	6.7	1	3.3	- 1
4. Is it easy for you to come up with topics for your stories?	Yes	4	13.3	12	40.0	+ 8
	No	10	33.3	7	23.3	- 3
	Maybe	16	53.4	11	36.7	- 5
5. Have you ever worked with a word processor?	Yes	3	10.0	30	100.0	+ 27
	No	23	76.7	0	0.0	- 23
	Maybe	4	13.3	0	0.0	- 4
6. Do you think you will enjoy it?	Yes	9	30.0	26	86.6	+ 17
	No	15	50.0	2	6.7	- 13
	Maybe	6	20.0	2	6.7	- 4
7. Do you feel that sharing your writing efforts with your teacher and friends could hgelp you create good writing papers?	Yes	4	13.3	28	93.3	+ 24
	No	10	33.3	0	0.0	- 10
	Maybe	16	53.4	2	6.7	- 14
8. Would you enjoy having your best written work bound in some form of book at the end of the year?	Yes	18	60.0	30	100.0	+ 12
	No	4	13.3	0	0.0	- 4
	Maybe	8	26.7	0	0.0	- 8

students answered "yes" before implementation while after implementation only five students answered "yes".

Question #3. Do you feel that you could be an author who could produce and publish written work effectively? Responding to this question only three students answered "yes" before implementing the practicum while after implementation 27 students answered "yes" to this question.

The answers to these three questions are particularly important because they relate directly to the heart of this practicum. It is obvious from the results that the process writing method allowed the students to feel at ease and enjoy writing as well as give them confidence in their ability to write effectively.

Two other questions in the students' questionnaires had significant importance. The answers to these two questions indicate that as a result of the process writing method, the students enjoyed sharing their work and felt confident of the results of their work.

Question #7. Do you feel that sharing your writing efforts with your teacher and friends could help you create good writing papers? While only four students responded "yes" prior to implementation, 28 students answered "yes" at

the end of the program.

In question #8, when asked if they would enjoy having their best written work bound in book form at the end of the year, 18 students answered "yes" at the beginning of the year, but after implementation all 30 students answered "yes".

It is evident that the second objective of the practicum was met when it is noted that the overwhelming majority of the students stated at the end of the year that they enjoy writing, they feel that they could publish written work effectively, and they enjoy having their work bound in book form. A complete reversal from their original answers at the beginning of the year.

In order to measure the third objective (65% of the parents involved will recognize the effectiveness of the process writing program and the need for their involvement), the same procedure was followed. The questionnaires were given to the parents at the beginning and at the end of the implementation (see Appendix D), and the data were gathered and compared. The results of this comparison are recorded on a comparison chart (see Table 8). This chart revealed some very positive results.

Table 8

Parents' Pre and Post-Implementation Questionnaires Results Comparison Chart

Statement		Pre-Impl. Resp.	Pre-Impl. %	Post-Impl. Resp.	Post-Impl. %	Diff.
1. Parents should get involved helping their children with their homework writing assignments.	S.A.	7	23.3	15	50.0	+ 8
	A.	9	30.0	9	30.0	0
	U.	6	20.0	4	13.3	- 2
	D.	8	26.7	2	6.7	- 6
	S.D.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
2. I am satisfied with the basic writing instruction that my child is currently receiving.	S.A.	0	0.0	23	76.6	+ 23
	A.	5	16.7	5	16.7	0
	U.	8	26.7	2	6.7	- 6
	D.	10	33.3	0	0.0	- 10
	S.D.	7	23.3	0	0.0	- 7
3. I believe that the involvement of my son/daughter in this program will benefit him/her.	S.A.	0	0.0	12	40.0	+ 12
	A.	6	20.0	16	53.3	+ 10
	U.	7	23.3	2	6.7	- 5
	D.	12	40.0	0	0.0	- 12
	S.D.	5	16.7	0	0.0	- 5
4. I believe that by working with my child I can help him/her with his/her writing skills.	S.A.	6	20.0	12	40.0	+ 6
	A.	10	33.4	13	43.3	+ 3
	U.	7	23.3	2	6.7	- 5
	D.	7	23.3	3	10.0	- 4
	S.D.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
5. I feel that my child's progress in the area of writing is satisfactory.	S.A.	0	0.0	19	63.4	+ 19
	A.	4	13.3	10	33.3	+ 6
	U.	6	20.0	1	3.3	- 5
	D.	9	30.0	0	0.0	- 9
	S.D.	11	36.7	0	0.0	- 11

Note. S.A. = Strongly agree, A = Agree, U = Uncertain, D = Disagree, S.D. = Strongly disagree.

The responses to statements #1 and #4 show a significant increase in the number of parents who realize the importance of helping their children with their homework writing assignments as well as a substantial increase in the number of parents who believe they can help their children by working with them to improve their writing skills. However, statements #2, #3, and #5 deal directly with the third objective of this practicum (65% of the parents will show a noted improvement in acknowledging the effectiveness of process writing).

Statement #2. I am satisfied with the basic writing instruction that my child is currently receiving. Before implementation only five parents agreed with this statement, eight were uncertain, and 17 disagreed. After implementation 28 parents agreed while only two remained uncertain and not one parent disagreed.

Statement #3. I believe that the involvement of my son/daughter in this program will benefit him/her. Prior to implementation only six parents agreed with this statement while seven were uncertain and 17 disagreed. After implementation, again 28 parents agreed, two were uncertain and not one parent disagreed. The response to this statement is particularly important because it directly reflects the parents' approval of the process writing system.

Statement #5. I feel that my child's progress in the area of writing is satisfactory. Prior to implementation only four parents agreed with this statement, six were uncertain, and 20 disagreed. Once implementation had been completed only one parent was uncertain while the remaining 29 parents agreed that their children were making satisfactory progress in the area of writing.

Answering the post-implementation questionnaire, the parents involved, almost unanimously agreed that (a) they are satisfied with the basic writing instruction their children received, (b) they believe that their children's involvement in the program benefited them, and (c) they feel that their children's progress in the area of writing is satisfactory. This provides conclusive evidence that this objective was met.

Three other evaluation instruments were used in the implementation of this practicum, and their use and results must be discussed. These instruments are (a) teacher-made editing and evaluation checklists, (b) holistic evaluation, and (c) personal observation.

The teacher-made evaluation checklist (see Appendix F) was used by the students as they wrote every paper. Before conferring with the teacher about editing, the student

reviewed the checklist. The students seemed to benefit more from this review when they actually completed a checklist for each piece they wrote.

The student then met with the teacher and they found errors together. The teacher then presented a mini-lesson on a needed skill, edited the piece, and sent the student back to make those specific corrections using his editing symbols list. Once those corrections were made, the teacher corrected the rest of the errors before publishing.

This type of self pre-evaluation assited the students in writing with better quality from the beginning. As the year progressed, students found themselves answering "no" with less frequency to the checklist questions as they became increasingly aware of the items on the checklist before they actually reviewed their papers.

Using the holistic evaluation guidelines (see Appendix E), the writer graded every paper turned in during the course of the year. Holisticism in grading reflects the view that writing activities are not describable through an inventory of each of their parts alone, but rather through the overall developing format and meaning of the story.

Evaluation using the holistic method was a new rating

experience for the writer, who concentrated on the content of the story rather than on the grammar, spelling, or sentence structure. After each sample was read, it was assigned a rating based on the overall impression of the quality on a scale from one to four. One being poor, two being average, three being above average, and four being excellent.

This method of grading allows the student who is less proficient in grammar or spelling to achieve average or above average grades in writing. This resulted in increased enthusiasm on the part of the students, who then began to concentrate on improving grammar or spelling to achieve excellent grades.

Finally, constant personal observation was used by the writer during the implementation of this practicum. Although the students worked within their groups, the writer made a constant effort to work individually with every student to help them learn to better evaluate their own work, and the work of others.

As the students became more familiar with the evaluating process, they would become more critical of their own work, and in turn, raise the quality of the finished product.

The foregoing represents conclusive evidence that all of the practicum's objectives were met and that the results of the practicum's implementation as a whole surpassed all of the writer's expectations.

The students who participated in this program increased not only their ability to write effectively, but also their ability to communicate. The writing scores of 73.3% of the students improved notably, and their attitude toward writing activities was greatly improved not only as noted in their questionnaire answers, but as was evident in their class participation.

The participants' parents also showed a significant improvement in their acknowledgement of the effectiveness of process writing to enable their children to improve their writing skills. The parents, through the implementation of the practicum, became more aware of the importance of getting involved by helping their children with their homework assignments.

There is no doubt in the writer's mind that the fifth grade students participating in this program became not only better writers, but more socially outgoing students because of it.

Recommendations

The writer of this practicum recommends its use in elementary school beginning as early as second grade. The writer feels that the use of process writing in second and third grade can yield even greater results when students reach fourth, fifth, and sixth grade.

When implementing this program with the younger students, closer supervision is a must. While students in the fifth or sixth grade can effectively work in groups to help each other express ideas, and pre-edit their work, the younger students would require the personal assistance of the teacher in these areas, making the task more difficult for the teacher. However, although the progress may be slower in the earlier grades, as those students become familiar with the process writing method, their progress at the higher grades would increase dramatically.

Anyone implementing a similar program should keep in mind that its strength is based on encouraging the students to express themselves freely. Student-teacher conferences should be used to review and edit material, always keeping in mind that the student is trying his best, and if he is dicouraged, his progress may slow down or stop.

When editing material during a student-teacher conference it is important to find errors together. Letting the student "help" builds confidence and helps the student return to his desk to correct the work with a positive feeling that can result in better work the next time.

A very important part of the program is the use of holistic evaluation. Evaluating the paper on its overall content rather than its individual parts rewards the student for the general quality of his work. Often a holistically evaluated average paper could be rated poor due to grammar, spelling, or sentence structure errors if holistic evaluation was not used. The result is that the student's work is better appreciated and his enthusiasm is built up, he becomes more interested in writing, and the quality of his work improves.

The teacher implementing the program must always be aware of the student's progress to maintain his level of interest at its peak. As the student progresses, the teacher should demand better work from him, or help him choose more difficult subjects to write about. This will keep his level of interest high, otherwise the student tends to become bored and lose interest in writing.

The use of a teacher-made evaluation checklist similar

to the one used in this program (see Appendix F) is strongly recommended. This checklist allows the student to review the basic elements of his piece before the student-teacher conference. The student should be encouraged to actually complete the checklist and then correct the items he answered "no". By doing this, rather than just reviewing the list, the student has a greater tendency to remember checking those items as he writes his future pieces.

One area that proved beneficial in the successful outcome of this practicum is that of parental involvement. Keeping the parents up to date on the students' progress is recommended. This can be accomplished by holding one or maybe two "parents nights" during the year, where parents can compare (as the teacher does) the work the student is currently producing to that which he produced at the beginning of the year. The teacher should review (if possible) the work of each student individually to help parents identify the progress made.

During the implementation of this practicum, parents were kept aware of the continuing progress of the students and the results were obvious in terms of parent attitude towards the program. Once the parents' attitude favors the use of process writing and they feel involved in the program, they can become very helpful by giving the students

support and encouragement.

Reviewing the answers to the students' pre and post-implementation questionnaires, the writer noticed that in response to question #4 (see Table 7), after implementation, seven students felt it was not easy for them to come up with topics for their stories, and eleven students were uncertain.

To correct this problem in future implementation, the writer recommends the use of a class project during the implementation where students would bring to class pictures collected from magazines, newspapers, etc. to be organized in a class file for students to review during the year. This activity would not only help the students to come up with topics for use in class, but it would also make them aware of the many sources they can tap, such as a student-kept log of topics for their future writing assignments.

Finally, it is recommended that other teachers be made aware of the program being implemented at the school. When other teachers become aware of the progress made through the use of process writing, they may decide to follow the system, and allow the students the opportunity to continue using process writing to become better writers.

Dissemination

Dissemination of the program is an area that the writer began to work on as soon as the implementation began. Teachers at the writer's school were informed of the proposed implementation of a new program. They were encouraged to visit the daily activities, to observe the students' enthusiasm in participating in the activities, and note the obvious progress made by the students as the weeks of implementation went by. This progress was also noted by the practicum verifier, a sixth grade teacher at the school where the program was implemented.

Periodical reports of the implementation of the program were given to the faculty at faculty meetings during the period of implementation, where the writer received very positive reaction from the teachers who at the time had visited the activity sessions of the implementation.

Once the pre and post-implementation tests were analyzed and their results listed on a chart, their significance was discussed with all of the teachers. They were encouraged to try a similar implementation in their classrooms in an effort to establish this program as part of the school's curriculum.

An information package is being prepared by the writer containing a brief description of the implemented program, the students' and parents' questionnaire results, the pre and post-test comparison charts, and the conclusions and recommendations of the practicum writer. This information package will be made available to all elementary school teachers who may be interested in receiving such information from the writer.

Planning on attending a TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) convention, and anticipating an opportunity to meet thousands of people involved in the educational process from all over the world, the writer prepared a summary type of paper describing the process writing method and the implementation of the program. This paper was distributed at certain meetings related to writing process conducted during this week-long convention.

Two speakers, one from New York and one from San Francisco, who were presenting their process writing programs at the convention were also contacted by the writer. The writer discussed with them the possibility of joining forces to prepare a presentation in relation to their experiences in next years' TESOL convention to reach as many teachers as possible.

The writer of this practicum has undertaken the task of writing a seventh grade Spanish writing course which will include a chapter in process writing for students at that grade level to reinforce their writing skills.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

To whom it may concern:

Having implemented a sucessful practicum to increase students' efficiency in solving math computations at our school last year, Mrs. Ada B. Hernandez asked for my assistance in identifying a current problem in fifth or sixth grade in order for her to develop her second practicum to address the problem.

After discussing the matter with Mrs. Hernandez and some of our other fifth grade teachers, the problem that seemed to be of greater importance is that of the students failing to properly complete their writing assignments and other literature and writing skills objectives.

I understand that Mrs. Hernandez intends to implement her second practicum during the entire 1986-87 school year and I have asked her to address the above problem in her project.

Sincerely yours,

Paul J. L. Papier
School Principal

APPENDIX B

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____ Date_____

This year I plan to introduce my fifth grade students to process writing. Process writing is an innovative approach to writing which I feel will help our students to properly complete their writing assignments and other writing skills objectives.

I would like to ask for you responses to the following items by selecting the most appropriate choice:

1. I strongly agree
2. I agree
3. I am uncertain
4. I disagree
5. I strongly disagree

1. I feel that a new method of teaching writing, in which activities such as sharing, rehearsing, drafting, revising, and editing would be included, could help our students improve their writing skills.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I believe that modern technology such as computers could be a motivational factor which could improve the students' interest in writing.

1 2 3 4 5

3. I believe that parents should get involved guiding their children with their writing assignments and showing interest.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I feel that mechanical factors such as spelling, handwriting, or punctuation hinder the students' ability to write as well as their enjoyment of writing.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I found through the years that it is hard for many students to come up with topics for their stories.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX C

STUDENTS' PRE AND POST-IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONNAIRES

STUDENTS' PRE-IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Name:_____ Date:_____

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1. Do you enjoy writing? yes no maybe

2. Do mechanical factors such as spelling, handwriting, or punctuation hinder you from enjoying writing? yes no maybe

3. Do you feel that you could be an author who could produce and publish written work effectively? yes no maybe

4. Is it easy for you to come up with topics for your stories? yes no maybe

5. Have you ever worked with a word processor? yes no maybe

6. Do you think you would enjoy it? yes no maybe

7. Do you feel that sharing your writing efforts with you teacher and friends could help you create a good writing paper? yes no maybe

8. Would you enjoy having your best written work bound in some form of book at the end of the year? yes no maybe

STUDENTS' POST-IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Name:_____ Date:_____

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1. Do you enjoy writing? yes no maybe

2. Do mechanical factors such as spelling, handwriting, or punctuation hinder you from enjoying writing? yes no maybe

3. Do you feel that you could be an author who could produce and publish written work effectively? yes no maybe

4. Is it easy for you to come up with topics for your stories? yes no maybe

5. Have you ever worked with a word processor? yes no maybe

6. Did you enjoy working with the word processor this year? yes no maybe

7. Do you feel that sharing your writing efforts with you teacher and friends helped you create good writing papers this year? yes no maybe

8. Did you enjoy having your best written work bound in a book this year? yes no maybe

APPENDIX D

PARENTS' PRE AND POST-IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONNAIRES

PARENTS' PRE-IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____ Date_____

This year I plan to introduce my fifth grade students to process writing. Process writing is an innovative approach to writing which I feel will help our students to properly complete their writing assignments and other writing skills objectives.

I would like to ask for you responses to the following items by selecting the most appropriate choice:

1. I strongly agree
2. I agree
3. I am uncertain
4. I disagree
5. I strongly disagree

1. Parents should get involved helping their children with their writing homework assignments.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I am satisfied with the basic writing instruction that my child is currently receiving.

1 2 3 4 5

3. I believe that the involvement of my son/daughter in this program will benefit him/her.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I believe that by working with my child I can help him/her with his/her writing skills.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I feel that my child's progress in the area of writing is satisfactory.

1 2 3 4 5

PARENTS' POST-IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name_____ Date_____

This year our students were introduced to process writing in an effort to help them properly complete their writing assignments and other writing skills objectives.

I would like once more to ask for you responses to the following items by selecting the most appropriate choice:

1. I strongly agree
2. I agree
3. I am uncertain
4. I disagree
5. I strongly disagree

1. Parents should get involved helping their children with their writing homework assignments.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I am satisfied with the basic writing instruction that my child is currently receiving.

1 2 3 4 5

3. I believe that the involvement of my son/daughter in this program has benefited him/her.

1 2 3 4 5

4. I believe that by working with my child I have helped him/her with his/her writing skills.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I feel that my child's progress in the area of writing is satisfactory.

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX E

HOLISTIC EVALUATION GUIDELINES

HOLISTIC EVALUATION GUIDELINES

The following form is used to arrive at each rating.

The rater will read each writing sample and give it a rating based on the overall impression of its quality.

Overall content, willingness to write, application of skills taught, and achievement/ability, are the main consideration when rating each piece.

Student name _____ Date _____

	Circle One			
	High			Low
1. Overall content	4	3	2	1
2. Willingness to write	4	3	2	1
3. Application of skills taught	4	3	2	1
4. Achievement/ability	4	3	2	1

Add four circled numbers _____

Divide by four _____

4 = Excellent, 3 = Above average, 2 = Average, 1 = Poor

APPENDIX F

TEACHER-MADE EVALUATION CHECKLISTS

EDITING CHECKLIST

NAME _____ DATE _____

TITLE _____

NOTE: Put a check (✓) under YES or NO for each question. If you check NO, make corrections before you turn in your work.

	YES	NO
CAPITAL LETTERS Have I capitalized:		
1. the first word of each sentence?	___	___
2. proper nouns?	___	___
3. the word "I"?	___	___
PUNCTUATION Have I remembered to use:		
1. end marks (. ! ?)?	___	___
2. commas		
a. in a series? EXAMPLE: "Buy apples, peaches, pears, and ice cream for dessert."	___	___
b. of address? EXAMPLE: "John, your cat is inside."	___	___
c. to set apart explanation? EXAMPLE: "Paul, my brother, is sick."	___	___
d. before or after quotation? EXAMPLE: Mark said, "I am leaving." EXAMPLE: "I am leaving," said Mark.	___	___
3. apostrophes		
a. in contractions? (he'd, we'll)	___	___
b. to show ownership? EXAMPLE: dog's bones (one dog) EXAMPLE: dogs' bones (more than one dog)	___	___
4. quotation marks at the beginning and end of quotations?	___	___
PARAGRAPHS Have I indented the first word?	___	___
SPELLING Have I circled all words I don't know how to spell?	___	___
TITLE Does the title go well with the story?	___	___

EDITING SYMBOLS

	Indent
	Begin new paragraph here
	Do not begin new paragraph here
amoung	Misspelling
there ~~there~~	Omit
	Word or words have been omitted that should be there
christmas	Letter should be capitalized
(over the bridge)	Incomplete sentence
	This sentence or passage is nonsense
saw I ~~seen~~	Incorrect usage crossed out - correct usage written above
	Margin
	Punctuation omitted
	Unnecessary word, punctuation, or capitalization
in to	One word
	Fill in the lines (paragraph form
	Insert quotation marks